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# ABSTRACT

The instant invention provides means for evaluating onset of and progress of autoimmune diseases characterized by presence of autoantibodies against nuclear antigens. The invention evaluates the level of BLYS using antibodies bond to BLYS as means for evaluating the onset and progress of disease conditions. The method provides for evaluating self-antigen driven antibody related disease my measuring the level of BLYS in the blood using BLYS-binding antibodies by:

- 1) exposing samples of (a) sera or plasma from patients suffering from diseases arising from self-antigen driven autoimmune response to anti-BLYS antibody and (b) at least one control sample containing a known amount of BLYS to anti-BLYS antibodies,
- 2) incubating the product of step 1 for a time sufficient to allow said anti-BLYS antibody to bind to BLYS in the samples,
- 3) evaluating the amount of anti-BLYS antibody bound to BLYS in each of the patient and control samples, and
- 4) comparing the amount of BLYS in control samples patient samples to determine amount of BLYS in the patient samples.

The method can be used both as a diagnostic and as a means of monitoring disease progression and response to treatment.

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